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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP ANDREW MACDONALD, S/CT AMBASSADOR DANIEL
BENJAMIN, DS/ATA JOHN NASON, AND OBO ADAM NAMM
NSC FOR DPNSA BRENNAN
HQ USCENCOM/CCCC-CIG FOR JSEATON
DHS/TSA FOR TOM WARRICK

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EAIR, ABLD, SA, UK, YM
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BENJAMIN DISCUSSES CT ASSISTANCE,
AIRPORT SECURITY WITH SALEH

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary. During a 35-minute meeting on January 31, the Department's Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, congratulated President Saleh on the success of the London meeting and counter-terrorism (CT) operations the ROYG has undertaken in recent weeks against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) elements, and described USG interest in increasing airport security and sharing information on travelers in and out of Yemen. Saleh agreed to the upcoming Transportation Security Administration/Anti-Terrorism Assistance (TSA/ATA) visit, requesting at the same time additional CT support. When pressed by Ambassador Benjamin about Sa'ada, he indicated that the ROYG had no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire at this time. In a separate meeting, Foreign Minister Dr. Abubakr al-Qirbi agreed on the success of the London meeting, and suggested that the follow-up meeting in Riyadh would be important for determining concrete steps. Senior ROYG security officials expressed support for the Embassy's struggle to acquire land and a willingness to act on the Embassy's behalf. End Summary.

SALEH ON CT ASSISTANCE, AIRPORT SECURITY, AND SA'ADA

12. (S/NF) In a January 31 meeting with President Saleh, the Department's Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, congratulated Saleh on the success of the London meeting and suggested that stability in Yemen can be achieved only through a dual focus on security and development. He commended Saleh on actions the ROYG has taken in recent weeks against AQAP elements in Yemen and assured Saleh that he could count on continued operational support and intelligence sharing from the U.S. President Saleh said he was satisfied with counter-terrorism (CT) assistance to date and with Secretary Clinton's speech at the London Conference, but said he "would like to be more satisfied in the future" and appealed for the acceleration of additional support, specifically citing helicopters and vehicles with IED-jamming devices. Describing Americans as "hot-blooded and hasty when you need us," but "cold-blooded

and British when we need you," he asked for a "moderate blood temperature" and measured approach. (Note: Also present were Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Rashad al-Alimi, National Security Bureau Director Ali al-'Anisi, and Political Security Organization (PSO) Director Ghalib Mutahir al-Gamish, with whom Benjamin met separately after the conversation with the President. End Note.)

13. (S/NF) Ambassador Benjamin reiterated the USG desire to ensure that no international terrorist attack originates again from Yemen. He said the USG wants to help the ROYG strengthen screening procedures at all of Yemen's international airports, and establish a mechanism for sharing information on passengers traveling via air to and from Yemen as well as foreign nationals who have come to Yemen to study at language or religious institutions. When approached with the upcoming Transportation Security Administration/Anti-Terrorism Assistance (TSA/ATA) visit, Saleh agreed to the idea but deferred to his Supreme Security Committee (Alimi, et al) on the details. In the follow-on meeting, Alimi and 'Anisi both concurred with the upcoming ATA/TSA visit and expressed support for increasing airport security. 'Anisi, however, had reservations about sharing information on foreign students in Yemen, and complained that the USG request was too broad. (Comment: According to GRPO reporting, the ROYG is willing to share information with the USG on American students in Yemen and would likewise share information with other embassies about their nationals. While Western governments would presumably share information among themselves, this system would still leave intelligence gaps about non-Western countries such as Nigeria. End Comment.)

14. (S/NF) Citing Saudi Arabia's decision to suspend its military operations in Sa'ada and Abdul Malik al-Houthi's public acceptance of the ROYG's conditions for a ceasefire, Ambassador Benjamin asked Saleh if he saw an end to the fighting. Saleh dismissed these points, arguing that the Saudis gave a ceasefire ultimatum to the Houthis, and will resume fighting in two weeks if the ceasefire is unfulfilled. He called the Houthis "liars" and declared that they would violate the six conditions of the ceasefire. He indicated that the ROYG had no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire at this time.

15. (S/NF) In a visit to Yemen Special Operation Forces (YSOF) Headquarters, Ambassador Benjamin was treated to a display of military equipment and briefed by YSOF Chief of Staff Brigadier General Ahmad Dahan on YSOF activities. Ambassador Benjamin emphasized common security interests and congratulated Yemeni forces for their role in recent operations. Dahan reiterated the request for helicopters and asked for communications systems and additional training courses. He lauded Yemeni operations as having a great effect on AQAP elements, and indicated that the operations were possible only due to the exchange of intelligence.

FM QIRBI LOOKING FORWARD TO RIYADH

16. (S/NF) In a separate meeting, Foreign Minister Dr. Abu Bakr al-Qirbi agreed the London Conference was a success and expressed hope that the February follow-up meeting in Riyadh would help determine concrete steps to move forward. Qirbi agreed that a smaller group, focusing on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, rather than a broader donor group, would be more constructive. Qirbi said that the ROYG wanted to focus on the Top Ten Economic Reform Priorities over the course of the next year, but would need donor assistance to accomplish these goals. He expressed support for discussion at the GCC-hosted meeting of funding for an extremist rehabilitation center, indicating that an educational institute with a long-term plan would do much to counter radicalization and address issues of poverty and unemployment, particularly in areas where AQAP has a hold. Qirbi and other ROYG officials expressed support for US intervention with GCC member countries in an attempt to gain

financial support for a rehabilitation center as an expression of regional support for Yemen's stability.

EMBASSY LAND DISPUTE

17. (C) The Supreme Security Committee was familiar with the Embassy's struggle to acquire land, and said they were willing to act on the Embassy's behalf. Foreign Minister Qirbi said that he had been in communication with Minister of Religious Endowments Judge Hamoud Hitar, who indicated the ROYG's readiness for the purchase and resolution of a dispute over ownership. Alimi said that Deputy Foreign Minister Mohyadeen al-Dhabi was following up and had secured the full cooperation of the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Alimi encouraged Ambassador Seche to sign the contract for the land, professing that he would personally guarantee the investment. (Comment: In a follow-on conversation on February 3, Alimi repeated his assurance to the Ambassador that the ROYG is prepared to provide for the security of the proposed housing site both during and after construction. He suggested that the Ambassador meet with 'Anisi, who President Saleh has charged with overseeing the process, to discuss final details of the deal, including our timeframe for beginning construction. The Ambassador will try to see 'Anisi next week for this purpose. End Comment.)
SECHE